



Worplesdon Whitmoor and Rickford Commons

Distance: 6½ km=4 miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

Date written: 24-nov-2011

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Refreshments: the *Jolly Farmer*

Map: Explorer 145 (Guildford) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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Heath, woodland

In Brief

This walk is a secret treasure found in the sandy hills near an unsuspecting little town in west Surrey. The commons contain some of the best silver birch forests in Surrey. For refreshments, there is an excellent pub en route (ring 01483-235897 for info at the *Jolly Farmer*).



There are no nettles so any sensible clothing and footwear should be fine.

This walk is best in dry conditions. You can certainly do it in winter but you will then need ankle boots because the paths tend to be churned up by horses. (After a *very* wet spell, you may even benefit from Wellingtons.)

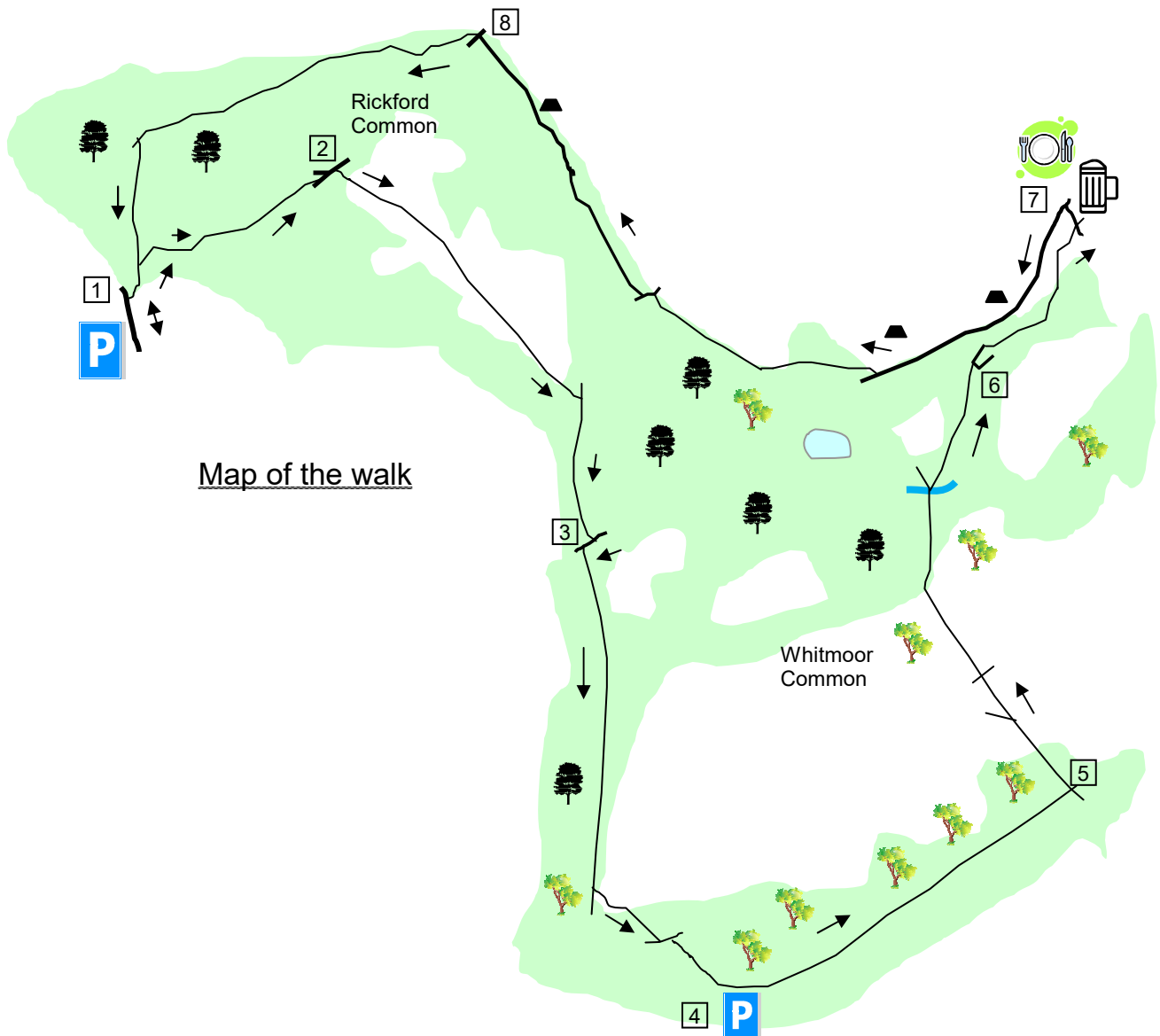
Your dog will love this walk too.



The walk begins in the parking area off the A322 road in Perry Hill near the **Worplesdon Memorial Hall and Sports Ground**, opposite the Asperion Hillside Hotel, **postcode GU3 3RF**. You can also park on the roadside strip there (at right-angles). There are two other good places to start: one is the car park by the *Jolly Farmer* pub, **postcode GU3 3RN** (start at stage 7) which doubles as a car park for walkers/dog owners so anyone is free to park there. The other is the Whitmoor Common Salt Box Road car park, **postcode GU3 3LH** (with parking fee “soon”) (start at stage 4), although the pub stop would then come earlier. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

Worplesdon stands on the edge of the Bagshot Beds, a formation of sand roughly 35 million years old, on what was then shallow sea. The sand keeps the terrain clear of agriculture and makes these commons so pleasant to walk, even in winter. There was a manor here. There was also a “Lord Worplesdon” but he is a fictional character from P.G. Wodehouse’s Jeeves stories.



Map of the walk

- 1 From the car parking area, facing the road, turn **left** for 50m, cross the road and turn **right** on a track by a house, a signposted footpath. Avoid the first track forking off right towards houses but, in 40m, opposite a small notice-board and by a sign for *Perry*, fork **right** on a drive. Just before a wooden entrance gate, turn **right** on a narrow path. Veer **left** with the path where it tunnels through dense holly, then through sparse birchwoods. In a while, your path gradually meets a road on the right, The Avenue, at a junction with Goose Rye Road. Go straight ahead on the major road.
- 2 Immediately, look out for a new galvanised gate on your right. Turn **right** here, passing a fingerpost [Apr 2018: lying in a ditch], and take the wide grassy path ahead into the open moor with the crest of Jordan Hill ahead. Keep to the **right**, keeping to a path that you can see ahead passing to the right of the tree-crowned hill. Near the top, go straight ahead over a junction of paths. *It is worth turning around here to take in the view back over Pirbright Common and beyond.* Keep straight on by a marker post, over a track, past a bench, and continue downhill with birches on your right and into woodland. At a T-junction, turn **right**. Your wide path goes through a wooden barrier by a 1-bar gate and passes a dark barn, a house called *Jordan Hill* and later an open wooden barrier, leading onto a wide track. Turn **right** on the track.



- 3 In 20m, you reach a fingerpost pointing to three local sights. Turn **left**, as for “Salt Box Road”, using the trees on your right to bypass any puddles. You will be following this excellent straight path for about 600m. It goes over a long bridge and continues beside the stream on your right. Further along the straight path, you reach a more open area with narrow ditches on both sides of the path. From here, you can see (and hear) the main road about 100m ahead. Fork **left** here on a narrow path, going past a large metal water trough. (There's a choice of paths here: look for the water trough – you will pass it on your right or on your left.) Stay on the path as it bends right round a dense clump of gorse and immediately forks in front of a tall thin birch tree. Take the **right** fork, shortly keeping **left** on a wide sandy track. Immediately fork **right** and keep right past the next marker post. Your path runs next to the Salt Box Road car park on your right (an alternative start).

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If you are beginning the walk at the **Salt Box Road** car park, first turn **right** on a path just beyond the railing at the back of the car park.

- 4 Go past a small noticeboard, avoid a wide path that forks off to the left and instead keep dead straight on, on a narrow path through woodland dense with silver birches. The path goes under wires, passes a scrawny bench and goes over a diagonal crossing path. The road on your right now gives way to a green field. You now arrive at a distinct fork in the path. Take the **left** fork, the wider option. You are immediately joined by a path from the left and you are once again in a woodland of birches. After about 300m, you reach a right-angled bend on a track. Ahead is a patch of grass with a bungalow over on your right and an electricity pole 25m ahead. Your next path is a smart **left** turn. It has a marker post in 5m with pink, green and white arrows, all pointing ahead. Take this new path across Whitmoor Common.
- 5 This path weaves in and out of trees over the gorsely expanse. After 150m or so, avoid a wide path branching off to your left and keep straight ahead, now on a much narrower path. In another 50m, you pass a marker post on each side and reach a crosspaths. Keep straight ahead through heather and very dense gorse. Soon a wider path joins from your left, with a wooden bench on the right, and immediately a boardwalk takes you across the marshy area. *There are opportunities here to observe the marsh-dwelling wildlife and soon there is a little observation area with (broken) railings.* The boardwalk veers right alongside the trees and takes you past a wooden barrier and over a stout bridge across a stream. After the bridge, immediately veer **right** in the direction of the purple and green arrows on a wide path under tall pines. Continue straight ahead through a (broken) wooden barrier, running by a garden and house on your right. Go between stumps and straight ahead on a gravel path coming from the house, *Heather Court.*
- 6 Only 40m from the house, just before where the two strands of the gravel drive merge into one, look for a post on the right with a yellow arrow. Turn **right** here on a narrow footpath. Follow this winding path arriving in 200m at a little horse pasture with two birch trees in its centre. Continue straight over, crossing a track to arrive at the *Jolly Farmer* pub. *The other side of the notice board is covered by photos taken of different bird species here on the common.*

The “Jolly Farmer” gets really crowded at weekends, which speaks well of the quality of the food and the pleasant surroundings. The large patio spreads into the garden where there is a barbeque hut. The meat is locally sourced from a butcher in Pirbright. As well as London Pride, the pub has Frontier craft lager, HSB and Adnams. Food is fairly high end but there

are also "sharing platters" and a lower-cost warmer menu during the winter months (see the blackboard). The pub is open all day every day with food 12-3pm and 5-9pm.

- 7 After possible refreshments, return the way you came but turn **right** on the track you crossed earlier and immediately **left** on a tarmac drive that runs to the **right** of the little horse pasture. At a fingerpost, keep ahead on the tarmac drive, passing on your right *Heather Court* from earlier. Stay on the drive for nearly 500m, avoiding all minor paths off and passing on your right several entrances to large properties. After *Whitmoor Hatch*, at a 3-way fingerpost [Apr 2018: picked up and propped up by the author], fork **right** past a wooden barrier on a bridleway through the woods. This new sandy track soon degrades to a dirt track and narrower paths, staying close to the houses and gardens on your right. In 200m or so you join a drive coming from a house on your right. Your next path is straight over the drive by a marker post [2017: missing its blue arrow] marked *Whitmoor and Rickford Commons*. (In practice though, if you are close to the house entrance, you will need to turn **left** first on the drive for 15m.) Continue fairly close to the properties on your right until eventually your rather overgrown path joins a drive coming from *Upper Jordan*. Keep right on the drive, going past the imposing *Gooserye* and finally reaching a road. Turn **left** on the road.
- 8 In only 20m, fork **right** on a woodland path identified by a small fingerpost. Your path crosses a tarmac drive. It then runs under tall pines, followed by thin birches. In 250m, you pass under wires and, in 150m or so, go over a drive by a house, followed by another drive after 100m and another house. Your path nears a road on your left. 20m before it meets the road, go **left** on a very narrow path and cross the road to a plank bridge by a fingerpost indicating a footpath going slightly uphill into woodland. You soon meet a redbrick house *Perry* on your left. Continue past the house, shortly ignoring a marked footpath on your right. (If you did not start the walk at the A322 road, take a sharp left turn opposite a small noticeboard and by a sign for *Perry*; and pick up the route from stage 1; otherwise continue as stated.) Stay on this track avoiding all turnings off until you pass a house on your left and immediately reach the main A322 road in *Perry Hill*. Turn **left** and cross the road reaching the parking area where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: the starting point is on the A322 Guildford-Bracknell road. If coming from the A3, come off at Guildford and follow signs for *Worplesdon* or *Bagshot and Pirbright*. After passing the *White Lyon* pub on the right, you will find the parking area ½ km=500 yds further on the left. If coming from the M3, come off at junction 3 *Lightwater* and follow sign for *Woking* or *Guildford*. After the *Fox Corner* roundabout, the parking area is about 1 km=1000 yds further on the right.

By bus/train: bus 28 from *Woking Station* to a bus stop next to the starting point.

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